

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Yone Taniguchi, 77, retired Dole Company (Hawaiian Pine Company) field forelady

Yone (Tanaka) Taniguchi, Japanese, was born on January 8, 1902 in Peahi, Maui. Her parents first came to Hakalau, Hawaii from Yamaguchi-ken, Japan to be sugar plantation laborers. Later, they moved to Maui and became vegetable farmers.

The fifth of eight children, she attended Paia Elementary School until the seventh grade before having to quit to take care of her sick mother. After working briefly as a housemaid, she worked as a clerk in the post office at Haiku in 1919 and remained there until 1926.

Her career in the pineapple industry began in 1927, working at the Haiku Fruit and Packing Company cannery as a packer and, eventually, as a forelady. That same year, she married Shigeru Taniguchi, a Haiku Fruit and Packing Company employee. In 1929, she gave birth to her only child, Walter.

Because canning and field operations were ceased in Haiku in 1938, the Taniguchis were transferred to the Hawaiian Pine Company's Wahiawa plantation and assigned to Kipapa-5 Camp. She eventually became a field forelady.

After leaving the fields in 1957, she became manager of the Dole pineapple stand in Wahiawa, remaining there until her retirement in 1962.

Now living in Whitmore, she is an active member of the Wahiawa Hongwanji Mission and enjoys sewing, cooking and yardwork.

NOTES FROM UNRECORDED INTERVIEW

with

Yone Taniguchi (YT)

March 13, 1979

Whitmore, Oahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[NOTE: At Mrs. Taniguchi's request, no tape recordings were made. The following transcript closely corresponds to the near verbatim notes and immediate recollections of the sessions. The interviewer made every effort to retain the accuracy and flavor of a taped interview. The notes were taken by Michiko Kodama.]

WN: Can we start by telling us where and when you were born?

YT: I was born on January 8, 1902 at Peahi, Maui.

WN: Before coming to Maui, your parents were on the Big Island?

YT: Yes, they first came to the Big Island. The exact place I'm not sure. My father came in 1885 on the Tokyo Maru. My mother came on the Takasago Maru in 1887. My father came to work on the sugar plantation--they were on contract. After three years they could return [to Japan] free.

WN: Did your mother work in the sugar fields?

YT: My mother worked in the fields. That was the only work they had. My mother was not married to my father at that time. Her husband was sick, so he went back to Japan. She stayed back because she thought she could return to Japan in three years but people told her she couldn't make it. She was alone in the field working for \$5 a month. Later, she learned that her husband died in Japan, so she married my father.

WN: Were there other single women working in the fields?

YT: Not too many. She was the only one, I think. Most all married women worked in fields unless they had children.

WN: Why did your parents move from the Big Island to Maui?

YT: That I don't remember.

WN: Did they continue to work on a sugar plantation on Maui?

YT: Yes, they were still in sugar on Maui. This was in Huelo. I forgot to mention that my parents were married by a Hawaiian minister, Reverend Inaina, and they stayed with a Hawaiian family for awhile in Huelo. Later they left sugar and went into farming at Peahi, but I don't know when.

WN: What type of farming were your parents into?

YT: We grew cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, watermelons. We had two horses and one wagon. We couldn't sell the produce at Peahi, because it was so country and everybody was doing farming, so we sold at Paia.

WN: Who owned the land your father farmed on?

YT: I don't know who owned it. I know it was leased, though.

WN: Did you work at all on your father's farm?

YT: Yes. I helped drive horses and watched for birds going for seedlings. I was six years old then. My brothers and sisters weeded with the hoe.

WN: Why did your father leave farming?

YT: Well, he wasn't making too much money on the farm. My sisters were at Maunaolu, and they persuaded my father to become a gardener at Maunaolu Boarding School [now Maunaolu College]. I was nine years old at the time [1911]. We lived in the employee cottage.

WN: Did you attend Maunaolu School?

YT: No. I could have gone to Maunaolu Boarding School, which was only a hundred yards away from our house, but my mother wanted us to attend Japanese school. Maunaolu didn't have a Japanese school, so we went to Paia School. I remained there until the seventh grade [1915].

WN: Why did you leave school?

YT: I quit because my mother got sick. The doctor said she had a weak heart and [she] would not live longer than six months. One of my sisters taught lau hala, and two others had to go to work as maids for white families [in order] to help my father. And since my parents wanted my brothers to go to school, I stayed at home and took care of my mother.

WN: Before your mother became sick, was she working at all?

YT: Yes, she did laundry for a little while at Maunaolu.

WN: Did your parents encourage any of the girls to go to school?

YT: No, they told us to go to work and help the family. Only my youngest sister went to the University, but she's six years younger than me. So she's 71 now.

WN: What did you want to be when you grew up?

YT: I wanted to be a typist, but I didn't have a chance to go to school. We didn't have the money. There were seven of us, and my father's pay was only \$25 a month.

WN: Let's see.... You started working at the post office in Haiku in 1919?

YT: Yes. I sold stamps, made money orders, did COD's, handled the general delivery boxes. That was my work. The mail was delivered from Haiku to Kaupo. I had to segregate the mail. I had to separate all of the mail and put them in separate bags for the different post offices. For example, if mail was going to Hana, Kipahulu and Kaupo, I would put them all in the Keanae bag, since Keanae was the closest [to Haiku]. When the bag reached Keanae, someone there would take out only the Keanae mail. The bag would then travel to Hana, then Kipahulu, then finally, Kaupo.

WN: Would all the mail fit into one bag?

YT: We did this only for the first class mail, because there wasn't too many [of first class mail]. For regular mail, I would sort the mail for each town into separate bags.

WN: So for regular mail, Keanae would have its own bag, Hana would have its own bag, and so forth?

YT: That's right. Sometimes during Christmas time, more than 80 bags would come into the post office. They were duffel bags, and they were very heavy, very heavy. Especially the magazines. You know, like Good Housekeeping and Saturday Evening Post. I had to sometimes drag the bag on the floor.

WN: Were you the only one working there regularly?

YT: Only me, and there was a postmaster, Mr. William Wells. The depot office was next door, and the train passed by right in front of our building. There was a depot boy, Mr. Okazaki, who loaded the mail bags onto the platform.

WN: How did you get the post office job?

YT: My sister--the one eight years older than me--was working at Haiku Fruit and Packing Company as a forelady. She asked me if I wanted

to work at the post office. Of course I had to study the regulations of the post office, but I caught on fast. I had to know how many stamps and money orders I sold. If the money corresponded, it was okay. Mr. Wells was slick--he was an old man (70) but he tested me. Sometimes he would leave 50 cents or \$1 loose, but I wouldn't touch it. I would ask him about it, and he would say, "Did I leave the money there?" So he trusted me for everything.

WN: Did you have to take some sort of test?

YT: No. For some reason, I didn't have to take a Civil Service exam. That was a good thing, because I had no education and I wouldn't have passed.

WN: Where did you live in Haiku?

YT: I lived with my sister for all the seven years I worked at the post office. I paid for food, but not for rent, because the house was provided free by the Haiku Fruit and Packing Company [her sister worked at the cannery]. But the company never said anything about me living there.

WN: Did you enjoy your post office job?

YT: Oh yes. I loved post office work. It was better than any job I had. I only wish I had more education. With a high school education it would have been no hardship for me. But there [the post office] I could work with words, figure things out. I would get smarter, and I could educate myself. If you don't add and subtract, then you forget all.

WN: How did post office work compare to pineapple field work?

YT: In the fields, I didn't learn anything. I just used my eyes. I always wished I could go back to the post office, but my husband was transferred to Honolulu [in 1938], and I had my son [born in 1929] so I couldn't do that.

WN: You left the post office job in 1926. Why did you leave?

YT: I got sick, so the postmaster told me to rest for one year. He got a high school boy to substitute for me. At the end of the year when I was better I felt I didn't want to push the high school boy out, so I worked at the American Can Company in Haiku for three months.

WN: This was in the summer of 1927?

YT: That's right. I worked at American Can for only three months.

WN: What did you do at American Can?

YT: I worked at the machine which cut paper [cardboard] gaskets. At that time there were no rubber gaskets, only cardboard kind. After I cut the gaskets, another person would check to see if they were round. Then she would pack them in boxes. We threw away the parts we couldn't cut. It was dangerous work. One mistake and you could cut your hand because the blades were very sharp.

WN: How many of you women were doing this?

YT: There were about three or four girls. Some women cut tin plates for the cans. The men stripped the cardboard from the big roll. The rolls were heavy, so the women couldn't do that job.

WN: After that summer in American Can, you began working in the Haiku Fruit and Packing Company cannery?

YT: Yes. After we got married, I found out that my husband didn't have much money because he was sending money to Japan. So I started working in the cannery. I worked at the packing table--packing number ones, number twos and number threes. Number three was the lesser grade--not fancy. I also worked on crush. I had to separate the white ones from the yellow ones. My sister was a forelady, and the boss told my sister to make me a forelady on crush. This was six months after I started. I was a forelady about one-half of the time.

WN: You mentioned crush. What did the women do in crush?

YT: There were 16 ladies to a table. They would take out all the rubbish from the crushed pineapple with pinchers, while the belt was moving. Then machines would put the crushed pineapple in cans.

WN: How long were you doing this?

YT: I worked for two years....not quite two years. After giving birth to my son in August 1929, I didn't work.

WN: So you were working while you were pregnant?

YT: Yes. I worked until I was seven months pregnant. I couldn't take it. Lots of the women worked until they were eight months pregnant.

WN: So after giving birth you didn't work. How long did you stay out?

YT: I returned to the cannery in 1933. When it was not busy on the floor side, like in the wintertime, I used to go up to the warehouse side. At that time the American Can Company was separated from the cannery by a street, and there was a conveyor belt running in between the two buildings. When we ran short of cans, American Can would send over the cans and we would stack them way up high.

- WN: Did you enjoy working in the warehouse more than the cannery?
- YT: Well, the area in the warehouse was drier. We didn't have rubber gloves like in the cannery, just cloth gloves. And we didn't even use them. We would grab four cans at a time, and it was slow work.
- WN: What else did the women do in the warehouse?
- YT: We had to clean out the rust from the outside of the cans with steel wool. Only the outside, though. If we found rust on the inside of the can, we would have to throw the can away.
- WN: What jobs were the men doing?
- YT: The men were on the Ginacas--some were mechanics for the Ginacas. They would stack the lug boxes four high from the truck onto the dolly and bring them to the Ginaca. [The lug boxes contained pineapple from the fields.]
- WN: How many Ginacas were there in the cannery?
- YT: Only nine. It was a small cannery.
- WN: What were your hours in the cannery?
- YT: It was up to you how long you wanted to work. They had a free nursery for women who wanted to work early. Three women watched the children. I took Walter there when he was four, but he didn't want to stay. He ran home, so a neighbor, Mrs. Tanaka, looked after him for me. She had a son the same age as Walter.
- WN: What type of work was your husband doing at that time?
- YT: He was working in the warehouse, on empty cans. They used to put the cans on the conveyor so that the cans would continually come to the packing table.
- WN: Would they hire more workers for the peak seasons?
- YT: Yes. Young boys and girls would come from the Big Island. They would stay in dormitories. They were about 16 years old, I think.
- WN: In what ways would the work change during the peak season?
- YT: During the summer, the women would work sometimes until 12 midnight. They would start at 6 o'clock [a.m.], but they didn't pay overtime, not like now. No later than 12, though. There were no shifts because we would work right straight through.
- WN: Did the foreladies have to work until late also?

YT: When I was a forelady at the crush department, we had to stay late in the office and open cans to see if everything was perfect. If not, everybody would get scoldings the next day. One table had 15 to 16 women. They had to dig out all the rubbish from the crushed pine with pinchers.

WN: Did the women get any rest breaks?

YT: No, there were no rest breaks until lunch time. But if a woman had to go to the restroom, I would just take her place. But they had to ask permission, and only one woman at a time could go. When someone was sick, I had to get more people--sometimes from the warehouse.

WN: Where would you eat your lunch? Was there a cafeteria?

YT: Yes. We would eat both lunch and dinner there. Dinner time was 5 o'clock. Some of the women ate at the baby house [nursery] with their children. Sometimes I would bring my lunch, sometimes I wouldn't. Food there was very cheap. I would have a sandwich, milk, and maybe a cup of coffee.

WN: After working in the cannery from 1933 to 1935, you went back to the post office. Why?

YT: I worked in the post office until I came to Oahu in 1939. I had to help train the new postmistress, Mrs. Smythe. She was new because when the Republican administration was changed to Democrat [when Roosevelt took over from Hoover], Mrs. Smythe was named postmistress. They asked me to train her. So I left the cannery because she was dependent on me.

You know, that was a very troublesome experience for me. In order to work post office again, I had to come to Honolulu and get my citizenship. I was an American citizen until 1927, when I married my husband. My husband was an alien so they declared me an alien too. So before I could work post office I had to regain my American citizenship, because the law said that aliens could not work in the post office. I had to take a citizenship test. They gave me a pamphlet to study. But do you know what they did? They asked me one question that wasn't on the pamphlet. They asked me, "Who impeaches the President of the United States?"

I didn't know, so I just guessed, "The Senate."

Then they said, "Yes, but who presides over an impeachment?"

I didn't know the answer, so I told them I didn't know. Do you know the answer? I'll never forget it. It's the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. But that was okay, since I got 90 out of 100, so I passed anyway. I also had to get a birth certificate. I needed two witnesses, so two Hawaiian girls that I knew at Peahi were my witnesses.

WN: What was your husband doing at the time?

YT: My husband was a gang luna in the Haiku fields. In 1938, the Haiku company was bought out by Hawaiian Pineapple Company [now Dole]. So all the Haiku workers were being transferred to either Lanai or Wahiawa. That's why we left Maui for Wahiawa--my husband came to Oahu eight months before I did. It was a voluntary thing, though. People weren't forced to follow the company. [The Haiku Pineapple Company, formerly Haiku Fruit and Packing Company, was purchased by Dole in 1935. In 1938, Dole ceased canning and field operations in Haiku].

WN: Where did some of the other workers go?

YT: Some went into sugar, some stayed in pineapple. Those who switched to sugar moved to Puunene. Many came to Oahu. The wives followed their husbands with the children.

WN: If you had a choice between going to Lanai or going to Oahu, why did you choose Oahu?

YT: Mr. W. A. Cleghorn [field superintendent] wanted my husband and I to go to Lanai, but I said no because my son was weak and needed medical attention. Wahiawa was okay because there were doctors there. I didn't want to go to Lanai because it was too isolated. But not everyone had a choice. I guess we were privileged and spoiled because Mr. Cleghorn knew us and I guess he knew that my husband was a straight man. Some workers didn't like my husband as a foreman because he treated everybody the same--he didn't play favorites. Some people didn't like that.

Mr. Cleghorn was a strict man. He came to Maui from Waimea [Oahu]. He used to watch the workers in the fields with binoculars.

WN: Mr. Cleghorn liked your husband?

YT: Mr. Cleghorn would always mingle with the men. He knew who was loafing and who worked hard. He came to me and told me that there was one man he could trust, but I didn't know that he was talking about my husband. He said, "Your husband, he's an honest man." He [husband] was a job foreman, with 15 to 20 people under him. He was born that way, I guess. He cannot change. He used to treat everybody equal with everybody, since everybody was paid the same. The managers liked that.

WN: How did you feel about leaving Maui?

YT: I was sad at first, because I was used to Maui. I was born there. All my friends were there, and the people were friendly. I had a hard time adjusting to life on Oahu--Kipapa-5 Camp. I was always sick over there. Some of my friends couldn't take it and they moved to other places, like Honolulu.

WN: What made you decide to go to work in the fields?

YT: The foreman came and asked me if I wanted to work. My husband was only making so much--about \$45 a month in 1939. I wanted to make money for my son's education. My husband said that I didn't have to work if I didn't want to, but I knew I had to. They needed workers at that time.

WN: And you had no field experience before?

YT: No. I didn't know anything about field work. But I rather work fields than in the cannery. I found this out when I had to work in the [Honolulu] cannery one summer during the war. I only worked for five days, then I caught cold, and went back to the fields and worked with the men. I never went back to the cannery.

WN: Did they give you any instructions before you started work?

YT: No, not much. Only to buy our clothing, and what to wear.

WN: What jobs did you do in the fields when you first started in 1939?

YT: We would pick slips and suckers and pile them in bunches of 10. Then we would leave them on top of the plants. We had to be careful because if there were more than five slips on one stalk, we couldn't pick the slips. The reason is because the pineapple which eventually grows from this stalk would have too many nubs, and so the juice would flow out when it is picked. So we only looked for stalks with less than five slips on it, and we would strip those. We would only pick slips and suckers from the number one [plant] crop. [See photo section.]

WN: So you would leave the slips and suckers of the number two and number three crops alone?

YT: Yes. But we would also leave some suckers of the number one crop alone too. For example, if there are four suckers on a stalk, we would only pick two, and leave two. Not more than two. If you leave too many, the fruit of the number two crop will be small.

WN: After you pick the slips and suckers, what would you do with them?

YT: We would bunch them in tens and leave them on top of the plants near the center of the line. We had to leave them upside down on top of the plant so it would dry. Then the men would gather them and load them.

WN: In those days, in 1939, did you have to peel and clean the slips?

YT: No. I heard they used to do that, but that was before I came.

WN: Would you strip all day?

- YT: Yes. When we were finished with a certain part, we were transported to a different field on trucks. Sometimes we would do hoe-hana. Since there was no mulch paper on the places where we walk [i.e., between the rows] to keep the growth down, we would have to weed. We didn't get piecework for hoe-hana. Sometimes the men would do hoe-hana, but only when they had no other job to do.
- WN: Were you paid by piecework for stripping?
- YT: We would have piecework, but I couldn't do much with piecework because I was slow. I did mostly daywork. They tell you how much you made at the end of the day by piecework and by daywork, and you would get whichever is higher. For example, if you pick 1,000 slips, you would get so much. If you pick so many thousands, you would get paid per thousand. And so if you picked plenty, your wage would come out higher than daywork.
- WN: So the faster you worked, the more you got?
- YT: That's why men would get paid more than women. They were stronger and faster and so they made more through piecework. Some women were fast, though. They were good with their hands, so they made good money.
- WN: Were you paid the same piecework for slips and suckers?
- YT: No, you got more for picking suckers because suckers were more difficult to pick. I don't remember how much we got, though.
- WN: How would you know which kind of slips to pick?
- YT: The job foreman tells you at the beginning of the day which size slip to pick. For example, he would say, "Pick 15-inch slips today." He would then check if we're picking the right ones. He would check each bunch of 10, and pull out the bad ones. The fast workers could calculate the size rapidly. But me, I'm slow.
- WN: In those days, were you divided up into groups for stripping?
- YT: Yes. Most job foremen took 12 or 13 workers. If he thought that a certain field had plenty slips to pick, he would put two women on each row and have them start stripping at opposite ends of the block. Most of the time each woman would end up doing half the row, but sometimes they would put one fast woman with one slower woman. So the faster woman would end up picking more. Sometimes they would put a man with a woman. Nobody complained, though, since we were paid by piecework. The faster you pick, the more you get.
- WN: What about picking pines? Did you ever have to pick pines?

- YT: The women picked only after the war started. Before the war started, only the men would pick and carry the pines in a sack to the roadside. The women would trim off the crown and bottom and pack them in boxes. Then the loaders would come in and load the boxes onto the trucks. There was one driver, two loaders down, and one loader up on the truck. They would load from both sides of the truck, and the man on the truck would take the boxes from both sides.
- WN: Would you grade the pines according to size, and then put them in separate boxes?
- YT: Yes. We would divide them into number ones and number twos. We hardly had any number threes, only in special cases. At first we had to use rings for grading. We would pass a pineapple through each ring. If a pineapple was too big to fit through a number two ring, then I knew it was a number one pineapple. You see, in grading, the height of the pineapple doesn't matter. Only the width matters, for canning purposes. We had to be careful not to force the pines through the rings because we might bruise them. The rings were square and made of steel. They weren't too heavy so we used to tie them onto our apron strings.
- WN: How would you get the empty boxes?
- YT: The men kept supplying us with the empty boxes. Sometimes they don't bring the boxes fast so we had a hard time. Those times we would just leave the cut fruit behind and they come later to fill the boxes. We couldn't just stay there and wait. We had to go to other areas.
- WN: Were you women paid piecework for this?
- YT: Only during the busy season we were paid piecework. But normally, it was daywork.
- WN: What would you do with the crowns that you cut off?
- YT: We just threw them away. When it was time to cultivate the land for the next planting, they would just plow the crowns into the soil as fertilizer.
- WN: You mentioned that after the war started, the women began to pick pine. What was that like?
- YT: We tried picking for a little while at first. Then the company said that we were just as good as the men, so they said it was okay. We used to pick the pine, carry them out to the road, cut off the crowns, and pack them into the boxes. We were paid piecework by the number of boxes we packed. [See photo section.]

WN: So we can say that your work was increased after the war started?

YT: Yes. Before the war, the men picked the pineapple, while the women just cut off the crowns and packed them in boxes. After the war started, the women did everything from picking to packing the pineapples in the boxes.

WN: How did you know which pines to pick?

YT: To tell whether or not a pineapple is ripe we would look at the eye. It would be orange. There were some pineapples which were ripe, but their skins looked wrinkled and dried out. These weren't as juicy as the regular ripe pineapples. Their meat was also a lighter shade of yellow than the regular pineapples. The best way to tell if these pineapples were ripe was to tap the fruit with our fingers. That's why we called these pineapples kon-kon pineapples [kon-kon is an onomatopoeia for the sound of fruit being tapped with the finger].

WN: So whenever you came across a pine which looked dried and wrinkled, you tapped each one?

YT: Tapping every one took too much time. After a while we had to learn to just use our eyes.

WN: How long did it take you to learn to recognize a ripe pine?

YT: It must have taken me more than half a year, but I'm not sure about that.

WN: What happened if you picked an unripe pine?

YT: We would just leave it there on the plant and it would ripen. We would get it the next round. It just takes practice. You get smarter if you put your mind to it. If you don't, you'll make mistakes. Sometimes you would pick one that's a little too green, but the company will take it. But if you pick one that's too green, they tell you to leave it for the next round. But they tell us never to miss picking the ripe ones.

WN: How did the work change when the conveyor belt harvester came to the fields in 1947?

YT: In terms of strength, it was easier. We didn't have to carry the pineapples in sacks anymore. But the work got busier. If a line had plenty of pineapple you really had to work hard to keep up with the machine. If there wasn't much on a line, it was easy, even though the machine was speeded up. When there were a lot of pines on one line, we would yell to the driver to stop. When there were a lot of pine the luna used to jump in and help us and take a line. Sometimes the pineapples were more ripe in certain places. For

example, sometimes we had to pick up the leftovers from the first round.

WN: Were men and women working together in the same gang?

YT: No, when I was working, only the women worked together. There were no men in our gang. Today men and women work together.

WN: When the harvester first came in, were you surprised to see it? In other words, did you just come to work one day and see this huge machine sitting in the field?

YT: No, I was not surprised. We had heard about it and seen it. They told us, "Tomorrow you will work with the harvester." I thought it would be hard and uneven, especially when we catch lines with lots of ripe fruits. But it wasn't too hard. If your neighbor was nice, she would reach into your row and help you pick.

WN: What were some of the techniques used in removing the crowns from the pines and putting them onto the conveyor?

YT: At first, we would grab the crown and just shake until the fruit snaps off. The fruit would land onto the conveyor, but this way wasn't good because the fruit would bruise when it landed. So then they told us to hit the side of the boom [made of metal] with the top of the pine while grasping the crown. But this way we would bruise the top of the pine. Then we started to grab the pine with one hand and twist off the crown with the other, but this would make a hole at the top of the pine and the juice would run out.

WN: So what, in your opinion, was the best way to remove the crown?

YT: The best way was to hold the pineapple in one hand and pound the top off with the other. Actually, cutting the crown off with a knife was the best way, but it was too slow. We wouldn't be able to follow the harvesting machine if we had to cut each crown with a knife. It was also dangerous.

WN: Was it easier to remove the crowns from some pineapples than from others?

YT: Since number one pineapples [the largest size] had small crowns, they were the easiest to take off. They were also heavy, compared to the number two and number three, so when you flip the pineapple onto the conveyor, the weight would snap it off easier.

WN: How did removing the crowns for the harvesting machine differ from removing the crowns when you used to pack the pines in boxes prior to 1947?

- YT: In the old days, before the harvesting machine, we would use knives to remove both the crowns and the bottoms. The bottoms have those small leaves. They don't cut the bottoms anymore--I think the Ginaca machine does that now.
- WN: What did you think of the new harvester?
- YT: I thought it was good. It was better than carrying and packing the fruit in boxes. It was also good because we got paid by gang piece-work. Eleven women all got paid the same according to the number of bins we fill.
- WN: Were there any bad things about the harvester?
- YT: Well, the cable which extends over the boom was sometimes unsafe. One time the driver raised the boom over the plants too high and the cable caught a live wire. The driver's hand was badly burned. He recovered pretty well, though. Right now he's retired.
- WN: What about speedups? What would you folks do then?
- YT: We would yell to the driver or the luna, if he's near. Some men were very clever. When they were assigned to extra lines with the women, and the machine was going too fast, they would leave the center portion unpicked. And when it was time to leave the field, we could see that the center part was not picked. I guess that's the luna's fault for not checking.
- WN: What about areas where the machine could not go, like gulches and curves?
- YT: Those places we would have to pick and carry the fruit. We were paid by daywork.
- WN: Do you know if people lost their jobs because of the harvesting machine?
- YT: No, I don't think so. Over here we had so many regular workers, and during the summer they would hire part-timers. Workers quit when they wanted to work somewhere else.
- WN: Now I'd like to get into your working conditions out in the fields. Did you have any rest breaks?
- YT: Rest breaks? No, we didn't have any in my time. We had a five minute break while we were waiting for a truck with an empty bin to replace a full one. That was when we were working with the harvesting machine. No, I think it was only about three minutes. When we were picking in a field with lots of fruit, we got plenty of these breaks.

WN: Was that the time you did things like use the bathroom?

YT: Yes. If you couldn't wait, you call the luna to take your place. If there are a lot of pineapples in a field, you try not to go in between [breaks]. At those times, you would ask your neighbor for help, and you couldn't go far. You go in the opposite direction--never in the lines you're going to pick. We would try to go in gulches where there were plenty of places.

WN: So you would carry around your own toilet paper?

YT: Yes, we would keep toilet paper in our bags. Also in the pockets of our jackets. We would also carry knives so we can dig the ground and then cover it up. We would hang the bags from the truck. When we had to go, we would jump lines and get our bags.

WN: How about when it was time to change your sanitary napkins?

YT: We would keep our napkins in our bags also. We would also bring a paper bag. But we would wait until lunch time to change our napkins so we could go far away.

WN: Could you tell me about lunch time?

YT: We had a half-hour for lunch. Usually we would eat along the roadside, if we're not too far in the middle of a field. Most of the women would eat individually. I would carry a large half-gallon bottle of water so I would wash my hands before I eat. Sometimes I would bring a smaller bottle of water for drinking.

WN: Wasn't there a water boy around while you were working?

YT: There was a water boy only when I first came--for about two or three years. But it wasn't very sanitary--everybody would drink from the same dipper.

WN: Getting back to lunch. What did you usually take?

YT: I would bring rice with okazu on top in a aluminum container. I was gaining weight, so I started taking sandwich--tuna, egg and lettuce. I didn't like to take tomatoes because they would get crushed in the bag.

WN: What if someone got hurt in the fields. What was done?

YT: The foreman, if he was near, would take you to the dispensary on his pickup. If he's not near, the truck driver would blow his horn until the foreman came. The dispensary was in Wahiawa.

WN: What clothing did you wear in the fields?

YT: Slacks, heavy material jackets, canvas apron, long sleeves, short extra sleeves. If we didn't wear these, we would get poked. We would also have leather gloves and goggles. The goggles were either glass ones or screen ones. I couldn't wear the glass ones because when it got hot it would steam up. And hat on our head and a neckerchief to prevent sunburn. I didn't cover my nose so when I got sunburn I would be two-toned. The leaves and thorns would always be poking me.

WN: What about your shoes?

YT: I used to wear canvas shoes, you know, like keds? But they were dangerous because sometimes when the boxes break, the nails stick out. I later switched to leather shoes, the ones which fit above the ankle. Some women wore tabis.

WN: Did the company supply you with any of these clothing?

YT: They didn't provide anything except the goggles. Sometimes the foremen had to watch and see that people don't take off their goggles. I owned about four pairs of slacks and seven or eight shirts. When I first started in 1939, some Kipapa-5 women wore skirts and worked. They wore skirts and kyahan [leggings]. Yes, I saw one or two ladies wearing that. But after 1939, everybody wore slacks.

WN: Wasn't it hot with all that clothing?

YT: Nobody complained about the clothing or heat, but during the summer it was really hot.

WN: How about rainy days? Did you have to work?

YT: We would work the whole day in the rain. During the winter the rain got so cold that my feet got all wet and numb. We would work in the rain as long as it didn't get too muddy. Funny, but during the peak seasons when I worked I never caught cold. Only during the months I was laid off I would catch cold.

WN: Were there any bad or dangerous parts of the field that you had to work in?

YT: One time during the war, the luna gave me a steep place--pali place--up near Robinson Camp. He told me to pick and carry half the pine upside. I told him, "How can I?" It was so hard that I only made daywork. He asked me at the end of the day if I was finished. I told him, "No, I wasn't," and that he'd better get one man to help me. After the man came in, he did two-thirds and I did one-third of the block. The man did a kapulu job too. At the end of the day, I didn't see too many pineapples packed [in boxes].

WN: What about the differences between picking first crop and second crop pines?

YT: First crop leaves tend to block the aisle. The luna told us not to push our way through because we would damage the plant. So we cut the leaf tips which blocked the aisle. The second crop was harder, because the suckers were full of fruit and would block the aisle, and we had to be careful not to step on the green fruit. The second crop had more fruits and more plants, so we worked slower.

WN: Can you think of any other hard places?

YT: Sometimes there would be extra lines at the end of the boom where the boom couldn't reach. This happened when we were near gulches at the end of the field. There were some parts which extended beyond the 11 rows that the boom covered. Those times some of us would be sent to pick and carry the fruit in those rows. We would start ahead of the boom. We would pick the fruit and place them into the rows where the other pickers following the boom could reach the fruits and place them in the boom. The luna told us to try not to put all the fruit we picked into one row, or else one picker would be slowed down and couldn't keep up with the machine. Also, the row which was nearest to the truck also had to be picked this way, because the truck would often roll over and damage the fruit in these rows.

WN: How did you get along with the men?

YT: The men were really nice. They didn't treat us bad. But we didn't work with the men on the harvesting machine because it would be unfair. We never competed with them. We just did our best. Once in a while they would get a man to help pick the outside extra lines.

WN: What did you talk about while working?

YT: We didn't have much time to talk. At lunch time we were busy eating or taking our breaks. We would say things like "it's cold," or "it's raining," or "it's hot," but we don't talk about other things or about other people.

WN: Did you think up things to try and make the time go faster?

YT: Well, I used to wait for pau hana. Everybody did. Time flies because we're busy with work. Even in weeding--some lines get plenty, others less. Same thing with picking. Some ladies would say, "Oh, it's almost pau hana. Maybe we should take off our apron."

But I would say, "Don't do that. What if the foreman...."

WN: How would you know when it was pau hana time?

YT: They would blow a whistle. Lunch time there would be a whistle too. We would take off our apron and get into the truck. Sometimes we would have to wait 10 minutes for the truck to come. Some women would grumble because they have work to do at home.

WN: What time was pau hana?

YT: Three-thirty [p.m.]. We would work from 6:00 to 3:30. We would get paid for the time spent driving to and from the field. Sometimes we would walk if the field was near.

WN: Could you describe what a typical work day was like from the time you woke up in the morning?

YT: I would wake up at 3:30 or 4:00 [a.m.]. Not later than 4 o'clock. Women with large families woke up at 3:30. I would prepare lunch and breakfast for my husband and son. I would prepare the okazu the evening before, maybe about three kinds. Walter usually got a school lunch, so I wouldn't make a lunch for him unless he asked for it.

I usually left my house at 5:30 and got to the stable in 15 to 20 minutes. We would then check our assigned places and position. The foremen would all be there with the trucks, so we would look for our foreman every morning. He would come to get us if we didn't find him.

WN: Would you always be with the same gang every day?

YT: Since I had so many different jobs--loader, harvester luna, planting checker--I was not with the women every day. On the days I was to be forelady I had to be told beforehand. That way I could bring a watch so I knew what time to blow the lunch and pau hana whistle. At pau hana we would go back to the stable on the trucks. Then we would go straight home from there. If I was a planting checker, I would have to go to the office and count for piecework. The foremen also had to stay back to figure out the piecework and check whether or not the work was completed.

WN: What did you do when you got sick and couldn't go to work?

YT: Kipapa-5 had no phones. Only the supervisors had phones. When I got sick, I would tell my friends or my husband to go report it to the company. You would have to get a slip from the doctor before you can go back to work.

WN: Before beginning work in 1939, did you have to take a physical exam?

YT: No, we didn't take a physical. But once a year we had to take an X-ray from the mobile unit. The company paid for it.

WN: Did they check to see if you were pregnant or not?

YT: When you got pregnant, you would have to tell the job foreman at your third month, but you could still work. There were no company regulations preventing you from working while pregnant. After giving birth, you got a doctor's OK before starting to work again.

END OF INTERVIEW

NOTES FROM UNRECORDED INTERVIEW

with

Yone Taniguchi (YT)

March 28, 1979

Whitmore, Oahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[NOTE: At Mrs. Taniguchi's request, no tape recordings were made. The following transcript closely corresponds to the near verbatim notes and immediate recollections of the sessions. The interviewer made every effort to retain the accuracy and flavor of a taped interview. The notes were taken by Michiko Kodama.]

WN: Mrs. Taniguchi, when you started working in the fields in 1939, did you start as a seasonal?

YT: Yes, I started as a seasonal worker. I can't remember exactly when I became a regular--maybe a year and a half later.

WN: So you became a regular soon after the start of World War II?

YT: That's right. I jumped from seasonal worker to regular during the war. I never was a non-regular first.

WN: How were you notified that you were going to be a regular?

YT: The supervisor called the women together and told us that we'd be getting a pension--a small one. So I knew at that time that I would become a regular.

WN: Did you get a raise in pay as a regular?

YT: Maybe just a little. Before the union came in [1946], I was just given what the company decides. I was getting \$2 a day as a seasonal. My pay did go up as a regular, but only a little.

WN: After the war started, did you ever think of moving into a defense job?

YT: Me? Oh no. I couldn't do more than what I was doing. I didn't have the education.

WN: Did you know of anyone who moved from Kipapa-5 Camp?

YT: No. I don't think anybody went from Kipapa-5. Of course, young men went to the 442nd.

WN: Could you tell me what it was like at camp during the war? Were there air raids?

YT: We had that. We had air raids. We were told that we shouldn't have any light extending outside our house. We had batten floors so the light would shine through outside. There was a luna--his job was to tell people that light was leaking from their houses. He would tell us to put paper or books between the cracks in the floors. And we couldn't open our windows because our window blinds were stuck to the wall so the light wouldn't leak through. Late at night we would open the windows while we sleep. While cooking, we used to put curtains and close the doors. The men folks used to wake up later while the women cooked. I was caught one time by the luna. He told me, "Mrs. Taniguchi, your light is showing." The luna--he was the same one as in the fields--he was told to be the night watchman at the camp.

WN: What was it like working in the fields at that time?

YT: We were told to run down a gulch if there was one nearby, but that was dangerous if a bomb was dropped. It would've been safe if only guns because we could lie down among the pineapple plants. When we heard the sirens, we didn't want to stay, we wanted to run home. The luna complained to us that we wouldn't get any work done if we always ran home. But the women had children, so we wanted to go home. I told the supervisor that if he didn't pick us up in his truck, then we would run home. So he took us.

WN: Would you go home every time the siren went off?

YT: Yes. Every time. If the siren went off at 9 o'clock [a.m.], we would stay home the rest of the day. It was only our gang--we weren't brave like the others. (Laughs) I would hear bombs once in a while--only for two weeks or so. We were only scared for the first couple of weeks.

WN: So how often would you women run home?

YT: Many times. Once every two days. Sometimes every day. The company didn't work for five days after the war started. When there were no enemy planes, the company told us to go back to work. So for the next two or three weeks, we ran home.

WN: Did you have to carry gas masks in the fields?

YT: No. We had gas masks, but we left them at home. The company never told us that we had to carry them. The children had masks, too. We had trenches for about two families, but they were dangerous. If was a heavy rain, we could have drowned in them.

WN: Did the company provide the trenches?

YT: No, the men dug their own. The women helped too. One night we stayed in the gulch. We took crackers and gallons of water. I caught a cold that night because it was raining. Men and women lay down on top of pineapple boxes--some people took futon. I hardly slept that night. The gulch was near our Kipapa-5 Camp, but one family didn't go--he was a brave man. They all stayed home.

The bombs scared me the most. My friend said that whenever a bomb passed by, things would tumble in the safe--you know in those days they didn't have refrigerators, they had safes with screens on them--because of the vibrations of the bomb.

WN: Did you ever see a bomb while in the fields?

YT: They found a lot of bombs in that gulch. You know by Wilson Bridge? We used to go plant sweet potatoes and we would see a 10-inch hole with an unexploded bomb inside. We told the job foreman and he called the Armed Forces. Once, behind the supervisor's house, a bomb exploded and made a big hole in the pineapple field. The pineapples flew in all directions and there was shrapnel all around. One time I cut my finger on shrapnel while working.

WN: Were you afraid of anything else during the war besides the bombs?

YT: We women were afraid of the black soldiers. We were Japanese, and we were kind of scared. The job foreman told the luna not to take the women near the gulches where the soldiers were, just take the men. The women were sent to the flats. They [the soldiers] all had guns, yeah, we were kind of scared. Until the war ended we were never too comfortable with the soldiers around. If we did something wrong, we were afraid the soldiers would shoot us.

WN: How about the Filipino workers? How did they look upon you as a Japanese during the war?

YT: The Filipinos didn't look too good upon the Japanese. Even in taxis. In those days they had point-to-point taxi service from Wahiawa to Aala Park [Honolulu]. Once a Filipino customer was in the same taxi as me, I couldn't even glance toward Pearl Harbor. The Filipino man would ask me, "Why you looking at Pearl Harbor for?" That's how the Filipinos were during wartime. So whenever I went to the doctor, I never looked outside the taxi, only straight ahead.

WN: Did you feel any discrimination on the job, in the fields?

YT: Well, I told you last time that the job foreman once put me on the pali area, while the Filipino men and women worked the flat areas. I don't know if that was because he was against Japanese, but I had this feeling. I knew I couldn't finish and I wasn't about to break

my back for that. That was the only time I ever had a bad feeling toward the foreman. I felt kind of sore.

WN: Did your job status change during the war? There was a labor shortage because the men went off to war. You became a luna didn't you?

YT: Well, they made me an assistant luna, not a regular luna. During the war, because of the labor shortage, they began bringing in 12 year old boys and girls to work in the fields. There weren't enough lunas for these kids, so they made some women assistant lunas to watch them.

WN: Were you ever a luna by yourself? Was the luna always with you?

YT: I was assigned to areas where the regular luna couldn't go himself--like watching the school kids and supervising the workers on the loading machine.

WN: The loading machine?

YT: Yes. The loading machine took the place of the lug boxes in the pali areas. There were two men loading and one man driving the truck. The loading machine had a conveyor belt which was connected to the truck. The belt had catches on it so that the fruit moves up into the bin. The two loaders load fruit at the bottom, one loader on each side.

WN: Would they be picking the pines along the way?

YT: No no. The machine only travels along the road. They pick up all the pines left along the road by the pickers. The pickers would pick the fruit, put them in the canvas sack, cut off the crown, and just place them along the side of the road.

WN: I see. So instead of putting the picked pines in a box, the two loaders would put them into the loading machine.

YT: That's right. There would be one loader on each side of the truck, gathering the fruit and putting them on the conveyor. I just followed and watched them. I helped load too.

WN: Do you know why they eliminated the boxes?

YT: Too much manpower was required to pack the boxes with fruit and load each box onto the truck. The loading machine eliminated one or two steps.

WN: When the harvesting machine came in in 1947, were these loading machines still around?

YT: No. I don't think they used the loading machine after the harvester came in. By that time, they stopped cultivating pineapple in those

dangerous, slippery places.

WN: So they used the loading machine before the harvester came in, and only in dangerous, hilly places?

YT: Yes. There were only one or two of those loading machines.

WN: You said your job as assistant luna was to follow and watch the loaders. What were you watching for?

YT: I had to make sure all the outside fruits were picked. The men sometimes overlook some piles--sometimes the piles are a little bit inside [the rows]. It was such a small gang--three workers--that they didn't want to send the regular luna, so they sent me.

WN: Did the men say anything to you about being a woman luna?

YT: They would say, "Why you have to come? You only a woman."

I would say, "What's so bad about a woman watching? The company told me I have to."

But I never ate lunch with the men. I was afraid to tempt them. There were only four of us--three men and myself. But I wasn't worried because we all work for the same company, and you know where they would be sent....

WN: Did you have any discipline problems?

YT: No. They had to obey me. When I told them to get a pile of fruit, they would do it. So there was no problems.

WN: Do you know how you were chosen as assistant luna. Was it because you were a good worker or something?

YT: Not that. I wasn't a good worker. (Laughs)

WN: Were other women named to become assistant luna too?

YT: Not at the time. Some women did assist the lunas because there were so many children spread out in the field. But they didn't have as much responsibility as me. They just watched the kids pick pines and so forth. I didn't see any other women working with the loading machine.

WN: Were you assistant luna all year around?

YT: No. Only during the summers. After summers, I went back to my regular jobs.

WN: Okay, you were a luna after the harvesting machine came in [in 1947]. What were your responsibilities?

YT: Sometimes the young boys wouldn't pick the pineapples. They would just hang on to the boom and drag themselves along. I would have to tell them to pick the pineapples and not only hang on. I would tell the driver to slow down for the boys. This happened especially when we were picking the first crop pineapples, and it was real hard to pass through the rows. The boys used to get tired so they would just hang on to the boom.

WN: What were your other responsibilities?

YT: Besides keeping an eye on the pickers and making sure they're doing their work? Well, once I was responsible for moving the harvesting machine from one part of the field to another. Sometimes the machine had to go backwards on the roads in order to cover the rest of the field. I had to figure out the fastest and easiest way to get it backed up. When the men are working piecework, you can't waste much time. So you have to use your head and figure out the best way to get the machine to cover the area you want.

WN: Did the driver ever try to correct you?

YT: Yes, when I got to be luna I do what I think is right. If a driver says that it's dangerous, I leave it up to him. But very seldom. I never liked working near the borderline side. One time the harvester driver jumped down from the harvester because he thought it was going to tip over. That time he said he was real scared.

WN: Would the luna often assign you difficult areas like that?

YT: No, usually I'm a luna only during summers when the school kids come in. But sometimes the luna would have a funeral or someplace to go, so he would ask me to take his place. So sometimes I was luna during the winter months too.

WN: In addition to being assistant luna, you once said that you were a planting checker. When did you become a planting checker?

YT: Ever since I started taking the kids out with the harvester. The planting season ran from November to January. They had a luna, but there were so many men to look after, so they told me to go to the planting fields and record the amount of slips and suckers the men planted. Men used to be checker too, but I was the only woman at the time.

WN: Did you have to count each plant?

YT: In the fields where the lines were straight and rectangular, I didn't have to count each plant individually. It was easy because I would know exactly how many plants there are to a row, and the exact number of rows, so there was no headache there. Whenever a

planter finishes a block, I would know exactly how many plants he did. [YT would multiply the number of plants to a row by the number of rows.] The hard part was when the block was curved. After the block is planted I would block it off into a rectangle and figure out the straight area in the same way I did the regular block. Then I would hurry and count each plant in the curved corners individually. Some curved fields would have two straight sides, so it wouldn't be so bad. But the hardest block would be the ones with only one straight side and the rest curved. Those blocks were the hardest to block off. ["Blocking off" entails visually demarcating a rectangle within the curved block; computing the number of plants within the rectangle; and individually counting the number of plants lying outside the rectangle. See diagram a on page 40.]

WN: You had to know some math, then?

YT: Yes, but it was no problem. I got good working in the post office [in Haiku]. Just multiply and add. Just the last curved place I counted all.

WN: Did the luna teach you to figure it out that way?

YT: No. The luna told me to judge myself. They don't tell you.

WN: You were doing this so the men could make their piecework?

YT: Yes. I counted for the whole gang. They were paid by thousands. I wasn't sure about their pay, but I know that the more they planted, the more they got. Some made about \$20 a day. The slowest men would plant about 8,000 plants, the fastest would plant about 12,000.

WN: It must have been hectic at times.

YT: Oh yes. I really had to run around. When one man was almost finished with his block, I would go there. There were 12 to 13 men to a planting gang.

WN: What happened when pau hana time came, and the men weren't finished with a block?

YT: When a man was not finished, I asked him, "How much more are you going to plant today?" He would tell me and I would include it in that man's total for the day. If he didn't plant the amount he said he was going to plant by pau hana time, I would give him that amount anyway. Then the next day I would give him that much less. [YT would subtract the amount the man didn't plant that day from the next day's total.] I didn't have to wait for them to finish planting in order to get their totals. I would go ahead of them and count the number of marks in the mulch paper [the marks indicated where a slip is to be planted. See diagram b. on page 40].

- WN: So that by pau hana time you would have a number for everybody?
- YT: Yes. I would leave the straight places for last, since I already knew how many plants there were. I would do the curved places first because those took more time.
- WN: Did the planters ever complain to you about your count not being accurate enough?
- YT: Never. They never said a word to me. Not to the luna either. The luna never told me, so I must have done a good job. But of course my count was never on the dot. You can never get it exactly up to one. I maybe off by 10 or 20 or so--either short or long. But I was nice to the men because I knew how hard their work was. Sometimes when I had time I would throw a slip to one of the men planting on the other side when he needed one. He used to wave and thank me.
- WN: We've talked about the harvesting machine. Can you remember any other machinery developed while you were working in the fields?
- YT: Well, there was the planting machine, but that didn't succeed. It would plant four or five plants before one would get pulled out by the machine, and so a man would have to follow the machine and plant it again by hand.
- WN: What do you mean "get pulled out?"
- YT: Oh, the planting machine had a big basket which was filled with slips. The slips would travel down from the basket on a belt and be pushed in the ground through a funnel. After the slip is in the ground, the funnel would open up and let the slip go. But sometimes the leaves of the slip would get caught and the funnel wouldn't let it go. So the slip gets dragged somewhere else, and so a man had to follow [the machine] and plant whatever slips don't get planted. This was really slow. The planting machine couldn't do one-fourth the work that the men by themselves could do.
- WN: Do you remember when the planting machine was being used?
- YT: The last part--three years before I left. I think around 1954.
- WN: Was it still being used when you left the fields in 1957?
- YT: No. They gave up before I left. But after that they may have remodeled it. I don't know.... Maybe....
- WN: Do you remember seeing any women planters?
- YT: After the war started when they were short of men, I saw about five or six women. But you needed strong arms to be a planter.

WN: Did you ever plant?

YT: No.

WN: How about new experimentation? What do you remember about hormone spraying which caused pineapples to grow in different parts of the year?

YT: We did that until I left work. We did it. We used to call it "gas." They used to spray whenever they wanted a whole piece of pineapple acreage to come out.

WN: Would you say that gas spraying helped to make the peak season longer?

YT: No, I don't think so. The company would say, "This summer we want so much." So they spray. But, they say that when you spray, the pineapple is not too sweet. The word "gas" is not a company word, you know. Somebody made it up. Just like the word "kon-kon." It's just a word made up by the people. Instead of kon-kon the company would probably say "less juicy."

WN: Can we talk about the union? When did you first hear about the union?

YT: Just before [it started in 1946]. There were people around Kipapa-5 Camp who wanted to form union. People from the union came and talked to us. We didn't work that day. The supervisors and lunas came too.

WN: You were a regular worker in 1946, yeah? So were you included in the union benefits?

YT: I guess so. I paid dues every month, but I forgot how much I paid. I'm not sure.

WN: Were you ever dropped from regular to seasonal after the union came in?

YT: Yes. That was in 1949. I only was a seasonal worker after that. So they gave me my pension money all in one lump sum. It wasn't too much, though.

WN: Do you know why they dropped the regular women workers to seasonal?

YT: They didn't want regular women because then they would have to pay them pensions. One woman I know was the only woman working as a regular after the union. No other woman worked as a regular. After I left [in 1957] a lot of the seasonals became non-regular. The union fought for them and they began to get pensions again.

WN: Can you think of any other reason for dropping the women down to seasonal workers?

YT: I think some fields were dropped from cultivation and returned to the sugar plantations, like at Wahiawa and Waipio.

WN: Were any men dropped to seasonal?

YT: No. No men.

WN: You once told me that in 1949 your husband was dropped from luna down to assistant luna. Why did that happen?

YT: That was understandable because he came from Japan and was not as educated--he only had an eighth grade Japanese education and some night school. He couldn't speak English fluently. This was in 1949. A Filipino came up to take his place. It depended a lot on the white people.

WN: Are you saying that maybe it was a racial decision?

YT: It was that way, too. My husband was disappointed. He wanted to quit the fields to work as a carpenter at Schofield, but I told him that he was an alien and so he would have a hard time. But he knew that the company would make him a regular luna during the summer, and that he had seniority. So he cooled down. I also told him that, well, I'm still working too.

WN: How did you feel personally about being dropped to seasonal?

YT: I understand because I was a woman. There were enough men, so I went out to work five to six months out of the year, and I stayed home the other months.

WN: You became a seasonal in 1949. Did you still work as an assistant luna during the summer months after 1949?

YT: Yes. My job didn't change.

WN: After the union came in, there was a job classification system which assigned different pay scales for different jobs in the field. Do you remember which jobs and which classification the women were mostly under?

YT: Yes, I remember that. Hoe-hana and stripping of slips and suckers was mostly women's work and that was classified as labor grade one [lowest grade]. Picking pineapple with the harvesting machine was labor grade two. That was all. [Today, stripping and harvesting are both labor grade two.]

WN: What about a planting checker?

YT: They didn't tell me anything about that. I think I was paid the same as the planters [labor grade three]. But I'm not sure. It wasn't hard work--only figuring. Even when I was assistant luna, I think I was paid only a little more [than the pickers]. But that

wasn't regular work--only when there wasn't enough lunas.

WN: Were you ever disappointed when you had to work at a job at a lower grade? For example, one day you're a picker, then the next day you have to hoe-hana?

YT: No, I didn't think that. They just have to pick the people who are good at certain jobs.

WN: Did piecework change at all after the union came in?

YT: No difference. Same thing. With the harvester, piecework was by the bin and divided among the 11 pickers. We were paid by the hour and by piecework. Women were paid piecework for slips, but I usually got only daywork because I was so slow. Work really didn't change with the union, except that we got better pay, although it wasn't much in my days.

WN: What did you think about the 1947 strike?

YT: I wasn't too happy about it. My husband was an assistant job foreman, and he wasn't included in the union. Only the working people were included in the union. I felt really uncomfortable with that. At the beginning, people were not that friendly with each other. Some were strong with the union, others were not. I didn't like it when I was told that my husband would be beaten during the strike. One day during the strike my husband was working with some women from Honolulu [those recruited by the company to work in the fields during the strike] at Pine Spur Camp. I think some [women] came from the cannery. Even higher up wives were coming to work in the fields. You can't imagine these white people working. And they did work. One or two of the women got hurt when the bus got hit with a rock. My husband was smart. He knew that the strikers were waiting for him at the entrance to Kipapa-5 [near Mililani today]. So instead of taking the main road, he took the back road home, through the gulch, and got back home safely.

WN: What did you do during the strike?

YT: I stayed home. I was a union member, so I wouldn't work. If I worked, I would have been picked on. All the other women didn't work, too.

WN: So what was your overall opinion of the union coming in?

YT: In a way it was good for the working people, but in a way not so good. If the company and the union would break in half [i.e., compromise], then it would be good. But then look what happened to the sugar companies. Kahuku went down. Aiea too, they only have a refinery now. Ewa too, went down. Because the company can't pay the workers. The union shouldn't break the company--they should only try to get what the company can afford. The

unions in Japan are like that. If the company goes down, the union can't get wages for the people, and what are the people left with? They have to go on welfare.

WN: What did you think about the company eliminating perquisites after the union came in?

YT: Well, in a way it was a little better for people. We had to start paying for rent and electricity, but it took about four years to equalize things [referring to the wage increase which accompanied the elimination of perquisites].

WN: Do you remember what was the rent you started to pay for your house?

YT: We paid \$29 a month. It was the same house [as the one YT lives in today in Whitmore]. They just transferred this house from Kipapa-5. In the meantime they transferred us to Kipapa-1 until our house was moved to Whitmore. This was in 1948.

WN: Okay. The company [Dole] decided to close all the camps and move everybody to Whitmore in 1948. How did you feel about making the move?

YT: Well, at first the company told us that we would be moving to Kipapa-1 instead of Whitmore. I was happy with that because transportation to and from Kipapa-1 was good because it was right along the main road. [Kipapa-1 was located at the present site of the Mililani Golf Course]. Everything was so convenient. But from here [Whitmore] the bus hardly came, and so it was inconvenient.

WN: While your house was being moved from Kipapa-5 to Whitmore, you had to live in Kipapa-1 for about a year and a half. What was your Kipapa-1 house like?

YT: It was a really old house. The kitchen was not combined with the house--the kitchen was a few steps away. It was terrible. Rats used to go in and out, so I would have to clean everything before I cooked. I would set traps. The rats were really big--scared you sometimes.

WN: Were any Kipapa-1 houses moved to Whitmore?

YT: Only one house was moved--that was a supervisor's house. All the others were broken down and burned.

WN: When did the company let you people purchase your Whitmore houses?

YT: That was in 1953. We paid cash because we didn't want to pay the interest. Now I think we made a terrible mistake. If we left the money in the bank with the 4-1/2 percent interest, we wouldn't have lost all that percentage.

WN: Would you rather have continued to rent the house from the company?

YT: No, I was glad to buy....better. At the end, it's your house. We felt that the company would make us leave after retiring if we didn't own the house. Lots of us felt that way. But even today some of the houses aren't sold, and the company doesn't take care of them. Lots of them have termites and they leak.

WN: How would you compare living in Whitmore with Kipapa-5?

YT: Oh, I like it here [Whitmore] better. We all came here together. I didn't like the small camp. Here there is less gossip, and I'm the type who doesn't like gossip.

WN: Were there any company-sponsored activities at the camps?

YT: Until we moved to Whitmore [in 1948] we used to have picnics down Mokuleia side every year. The company used to take us on trucks free. The company stopped that after the union fought for the people.

WN: Were there activities between camps?

YT: Yes, they had. But they ended in fights sometimes. Mostly for boys, they would have baseball games. But once I remember Libby's and Kipapa-5 had a fight, so they had to stop.

WN: Were there any stores in Kipapa-5 Camp?

YT: There was a store run by a woman, but we bought most of our groceries from peddlers who used to come. There was a Mr. Tamanaha and a Mr. Shimai who came from Waipahu and a Mr. Tomita from Wai-pahu. After my husband could drive, we used to go to Wahiawa, but not often since Mr. Tomita brought most of the things we needed.

WN: What about other services? Like a bank and a post office?

YT: We had to go to Wahiawa for that. But if we had a letter to mail we would take it to the Dole office and leave it there for someone to mail for us.

WN: Were there any rules and regulations that the company made you follow at camp?

YT: The supervisor would tell us that he didn't want to see any kind of trouble involving the police. But one time the Kipapa-5 children got into an argument with some Libby children. It turned into a big mess. The Libby kids came to our camp to fight. They caught the nephew of the storelady and beat him up on their way to Kipapa-5, and this lady reported it to a police officer. The supervisor was not happy, but couldn't help. The Libby children got, I think,

six months probation. After that it was quiet, but had no baseball, no nothing.

WN: Who made most of the important financial decisions in your household?

YT: We both did. My husband didn't make them all by himself. But I never went against him because he was the main breadwinner.

WN: What about household appliances that you needed?

YT: We both did. I used to tell him when I wanted something and he would tell me to go and get. But we were not extravagant because we had a son to educate. But it wasn't too much--he went to the UH [University of Hawaii]. Later, after I retired from the fields and moved to the pineapple stand [1957] my son and daughter-in-law lived with us for six years, which costed us about \$400 a month.

WN: Do you think that the income you received from the pineapple fields was an important part of the family budget?

YT: Yes, I think so. Otherwise it would have been hard for my son to go to school [at the UH]. It was difficult for him to catch the bus every day. It was wasting time. So he stayed at Moiliili Congregational dormitory for \$25 per month including breakfast and supper. He would bring his laundry home every weekend.

WN: Do you think you could have afforded the dormitory expenses if you hadn't been working?

YT: Well, maybe. But we would have had to squeeze, but then we wouldn't have had any money for saving. We tried to be economical--we always were in rags, but I told my son to wear what the other boys at school were wearing.

WN: Did you feel you had to work when you first came to Kipapa-5?

YT: Well, after working at the post office in Haiku, my husband told me not to work in the fields. But I couldn't stay home. When the superintendent asked for help I couldn't stay home. So for one week after starting out in the fields I was almost in tears. But as you once said to me, "gambarinasai." I wanted to save for a rainy day and for my son's education. My husband needed help because a luna didn't make too much. It was really hard because I would have to do the wash once a week until 12 at night, then get up at 3:30 or 4:00 the next morning. I felt sorry for the neighbor lady--she had three boys, so she had to do the laundry two times a week.

WN: What did you do after you got home from a day's work in the fields?

YT: As soon as I got home I would pick up my pan, towel and soap and go to the public bath--we called it kyōdai no ofuro. There was one

woman who made the furo. She used to heat the furo and wash it. The lunas used to go and cut the wood and haul it back to camp by truck. The woman's husband was old and not working, so he helped her. That was the only furo in Kipapa-5. Our house was close by so we only walked about 50 yards. Others had to walk over 100 yards.

WN: Did you folks have to pay the woman for use of the furo?

YT: Yes, we paid 75 cents a month for myself, my husband and my son.

WN: Did both the women and men use the same bath?

YT: It was the same water, but the furo was divided by a partition. Each side was about 10 feet by 15 feet big. The women used to take the young children and wash them outside, because you know what young children do.... Some young people were real bad and used to throw water over the partition. I was still young then, so I used to throw water at them, too. You know, at the bottom of the partition there was a space about two feet high. Some men used to reach underneath and grab the women. (Laughs) One time I heard a woman scream--I was really frightened. I told her, "That's what happens when you sit too close to the partition." (Laughs)

WN: When could you use the furo?

YT: It usually was ready by 3:30 [p.m.]. Pau hana was between 3:30 and 4:00. The woman would start making the furo about 1 o'clock [p.m.].

WN: How many people would be using the furo at one time?

YT: Usually about 8 to 10 women with their children, and about 8 to 10 men. I used to go early because I'm the type that has to take a bath right after work.

WN: Okay. After the furo, what would you do?

YT: Then I cooked supper about 5:00 or 5:30, washed the dishes, and cleaned the house. I cleaned almost every day, because the dust would come in through the spaces in the floor. Later we put in goza, but still I had to wipe it every day, too. I had to dry the clothes at night--if I left the clothes drying outside during the day, I would want to do it all over again because it would get so dusty. On the nights I did the laundry, I wouldn't clean the house because I wouldn't have the time. Then I would go to bed--usually about 9 o'clock.

WN: The laundry must have taken up a lot of your time, then?

YT: Yes. I would soak the clothes, then the next day I would boil it and then wash. That's why it took so long. Had to boil and pound

the clothes. That way you don't have to rub too hard. This was during Kipapa-5 time. At Kipapa-1 I had an Easy washer and an outlet. At Whitmore, I had a washer, too. I also had to iron my son's shirts every day with a charcoal iron. It was all right, but once in a while you had to shake off the particles of charcoal and you had to leave it flat or else the charcoal would fall out. When you wanted a lower heat, I would have to go outside and take some charcoal out of the iron.

WN: How about sewing? Did you do any sewing for the family?

YT: I sewed my husband's riding pants--you know, the kind that are tight near the calves and kind of loose around the hips. The job foremen used to wear those. Later they changed to regular pants. I was happy about that because the riding pants were hard to make. I used to buy his shirts and alter them.

WN: Did you have any garden space?

YT: No. There was no garden space at Kipapa-5, because the houses were too crowded together. But I grew onions in a small place. But here at Whitmore, the soil is so poor. Even the pineapple grown around here is small.

WN: Let's see.... You retired from the fields in 1957?

YT: Yes, because I was age 55.

WN: You had to retire at 55?

YT: At that time, all the women had to retire when they reached 55. Today, it's 65. But not many had to retire at 55.

WN: How about the men? Did they have to retire at 55?

YT: No. The men could retire at 65. The 55-year-old rule was only for the women. I guess they didn't need as much women at that time. I really don't know why they made us retire at 55.

WN: And you worked at the Dole pineapple stand after you retired from the fields?

YT: I was glad that the company gave me the stand, otherwise I wouldn't get my Social Security. Social Security came in 1952. There wasn't any for the field workers until then. When I was at the post office I didn't get Social Security because I was a federal worker.

WN: How did you get the job at the pineapple stand?

YT: The person who ran it before me, Mr. Sawai, retired. He asked me if I wanted to take the stand over, but I said no. Mr. Sawai was making only \$30 a month at the stand, and I was making over \$100 a

month in the fields. I knew I had to hire women to help me and I felt that I couldn't make a go of it. But they wanted me in the worse way. Mr. [Thomas] Cleghorn told me, "Run the stand for one week with any pineapple women you want, and if you think you can make a go of it, try it."

WN: Why were you responsible for hiring your fellow workers?

YT: Because it was my own business. My own concession. I had to go out and hire two women to pick pineapples for me, and I had to pay them grade two wages [the same grade as pickers in the field]. For the first five months they made more money than me.

WN: So didn't you get any wages from the company for running the stand?

YT: No. The stand was independent from the company. I was more or less on my own. But Dole sold me the fruit for cheap--I would buy the fruit by the pound and sell it for a profit. I figured this way I could make it so I decided to try it for one year, but no more than that because with all my housework I wouldn't be able to make enough to make the Social Security quarter.

WN: The pine stand, then, was indirectly connected with the Dole Company?

YT: That's right. It was more just an advertisement for Dole, so we couldn't sell sour fruit. We had to tap the fruit to make sure it wasn't sour. On picking days the company would provide the fruit. On other days, like the rainy days when the pickers didn't go out, my women and their husbands and sometimes my own husband would go out and pick. I didn't want my husband to pick too much because he wasn't that healthy. I also had three Filipino men help me pick and I would pay them cash. That's why it was hard when it rained, because I would have to hire these men. I would have to tell them to pick good pineapples or else I would have to return them.

WN: Where was the stand? Was it at the site of the present stand?

YT: Yes, same place. Oh, they have a beautiful one now. The one I had was just a shack. Every morning I would catch three or four rats.

WN: How was the pineapple sold?

YT: I sold whole, sliced, and juice. The juice came in a small can. I sold quite a lot of that and I ordered it by the dozens.

WN: Did you quote your own prices?

YT: No. I sold the fruit at the price I was told to sell it by the company. The company figured it out for me, so I couldn't use my own ideas. Even slices, we would go by the pound, so the plates [of pineapple] would have all these different prices on them.

It made my job difficult.

WN: Did you get many customers?

YT: Sometimes 10 buses would come at one time--with 30 to 40 people in a bus. We would go crazy. One driver would say that his bus was first, and then I would have to get all the people in one place. I had a peeler, slicer, and a packer. I would have seven people working for me on weekends--including three teen-age girls and one boy. We would sell two to three thousand plates. I really made money during the weekends.

WN: How much would you make on a good weekend?

YT: I would gross a little over \$100. But then I would have to pay the workers, so sometimes I got less than them. Sometimes as little as \$30, which was less than what I got in the fields. I couldn't go back to the fields, so I stayed with it.

WN: Why did you quit the stand in 1962?

YT: I quit at the end of 1962. I was going to stay for one more year but I got sick. I had trouble with my knees and I couldn't lift the boxes of pineapples onto the counter. I had already gotten the supplies ready for the next year. The company had a hard time finding my replacement, so the stand was closed for three months from December to February. I told them to ask Mr. Yoshida, who was in the papaya business on Molokai. He said yes, and so he stayed at the pineapple stand for five years. Now, the stand is really big, and they have a new boss almost every year.

WN: Mrs. Taniguchi, had there not been a pineapple industry, where do you think you would have worked?

YT: Hmmm. Let's see. Maybe I would have had to work with a family.

WN: You mean as a maid?

YT: Yes. If I stayed on Maui instead of coming here to work in the fields with my husband I probably would have been a white people's maid or a children's maid. I felt I was lucky to have worked in the post office in Haiku, and the later I worked in the fields and pineapple stand for my Social Security. If I stayed and became a maid, I wouldn't have amounted to much. I'm happy I was not a maid. The work is not easy and the hours are long.

WN: Did you feel you learned anything from working in the fields?

YT: I don't think I learned much--except figuring when I was a checker. My English didn't improve because so much pidgin was being spoken. I was the slow type so I couldn't improve my feet and hands to go faster.

WN: Did you improve at all over the years?

YT: I got a little better, but not much. I improved a little, even in picking pineapple.

WN: Can you think of anything else you gained from working in the fields?

YT: Well, in that line I'm glad I know a little bit about pineapple. If I didn't work I wouldn't know anything about pineapple. I only wish that I had more education. All my life I wished that I had a high school education.

WN: What would you have done had you had more education?

YT: Maybe I could have done more--maybe go into business. If my mother had let me do what I wanted, I would not have gone into pineapple.

WN: What is your opinion of women working the pineapple fields?

YT: It was hard for women, but it was still our job, so we all should be thankful. If you were a woman, and weren't educated, you ended up as a maid, a waitress, or a dishwasher in a restaurant. I used to think about working as a dishwasher after I got out of the fields--they always need dishwashers. But anyway the pineapple stand job came up....

WN: Do you think there still will be pineapple in Hawaii in the future? Say the next 30 or 40 years?

YT: I can't imagine there would be. Maybe at some other places. But they're bringing back pineapple on Molokai, and some people still think that Hawaii pineapple is the best, so it probably may stay but not on this big a scale. Sugar cane may stay too, but maybe only one factory. But I won't be able to stay around to say.

WN: Besides not having a better education, do you have any regrets as you look back on your life?

YT: I regret in a way that my husband worked all his life and couldn't enjoy it [he died in 1962]. But I can't bring back the past. Same thing with my son. If he had lived longer [he died in 1961, at the age of 32] his child and wife wouldn't have had to suffer. But we have to forget the past and make the best of ourselves.

END OF INTERVIEW

Diagram a.

YT would first count the number of rows from A to B. Then she would count the number of plants along row BC. After multiplying the two figures to find the number of plants within area ABCD, she would count each plant individually within area E and area F. The figures would be added together to find the total number of plants in the block below.

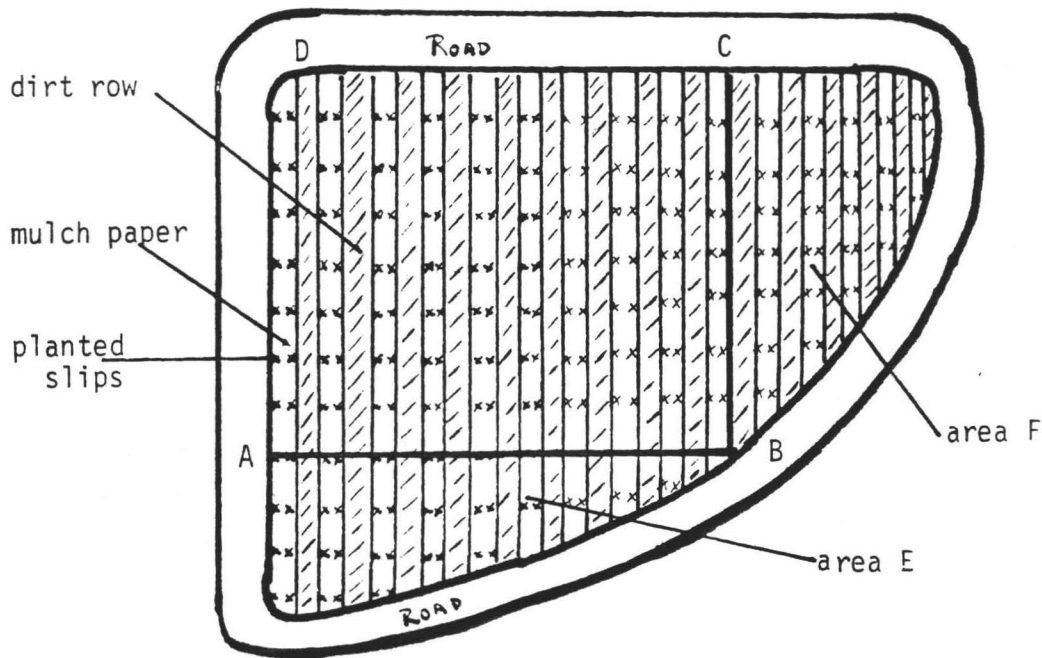
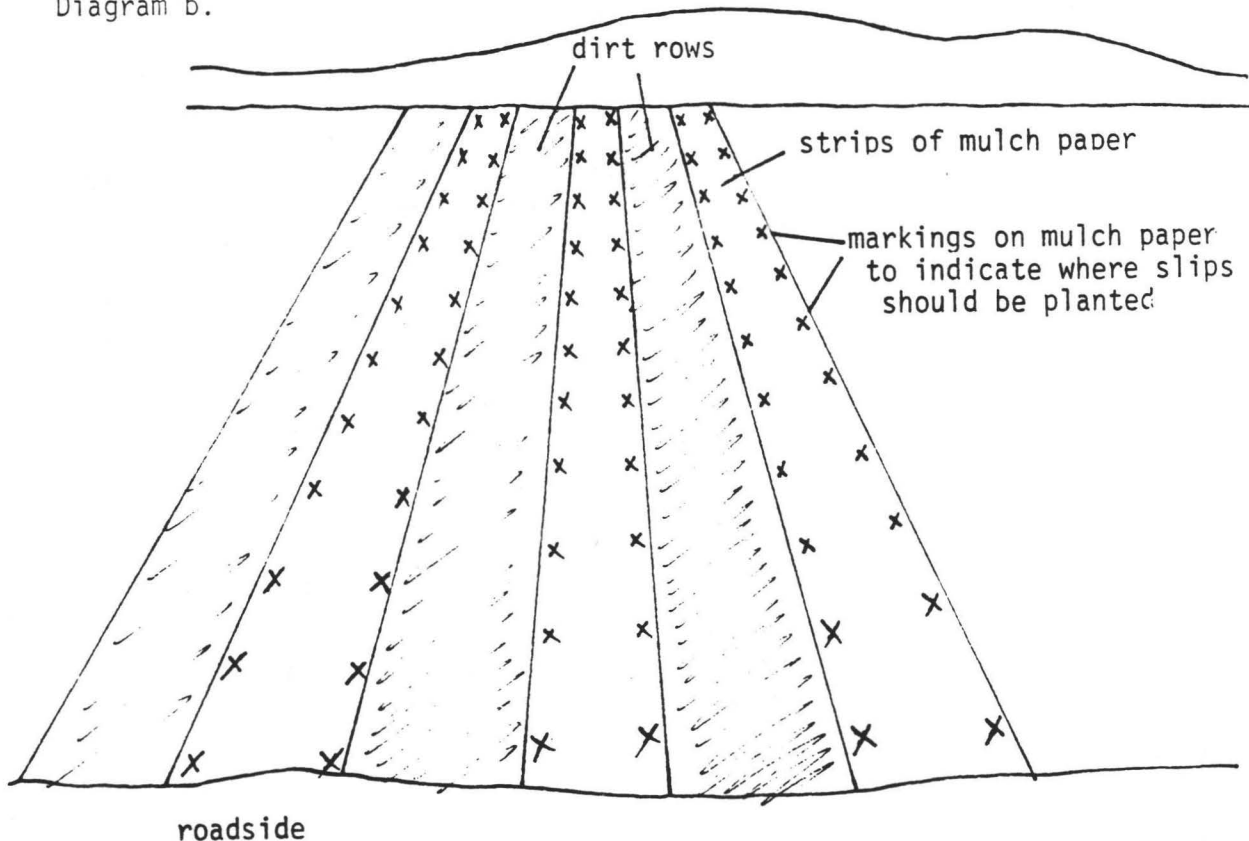


Diagram b.



**WOMEN WORKERS
in Hawaii's
Pineapple Industry**

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

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